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## AACN National Board: Passionate and Proactive

The AACN board is composed of stellar and diverse nurse leaders whose goal is to promote safe critical care nursing and healthy practice environments. We were invited to attend the April 2003 board meeting in Denver, Colorado. As Board Learning Partners, we were fortunate to actively participate in the board meeting and observe board members and National Office staff at work. We saw firsthand that board members are proactive and passionate about their roles as AACN leaders. Although we knew many AACN board members, we also connected with new friends and colleagues. Each AACN board member and National Office staff member welcomed us with open arms. For three days we submerged ourselves in meetings and social events in order to truly understand what it takes to do the work of AACN. The social connection among the board members plays a vitally important role in the governance of AACN. Knowing each other as well as they do provides board members with the opportunity not only respect each other, but also to hear each voice, achieve consensus, and foster AACN's mission, vision, and values.

The board consists of 13 nurses who each possess a unique blend of nursing and leadership expertise and zeal for AACN. This is perhaps AACN's best asset – a Board with an exceptional and stimulating variety of leaders. As you may imagine, the discussions were active and thought-provoking. The board members valued our contributions to these discussions and certainly considered our input as they made tough decisions. Many agenda items were as a result of strategic planning initiated from market surveys, regional meetings, work groups, and environmental scans just to name a few. Therefore, these items represented the most current issues in critical care nursing practice and maybe more importantly, addressed future issues. We were impressed with how the deliberate nature of each discussion and decision enabled board members to constantly focus on AACN's strategic plan and the needs of AACN members, industry partners, other professional organizations, and the healthcare system in general. The board's proactive leadership is vital in our ever changing environment and was obvious throughout all activities.

During the board meeting proceedings we were very impressed by the passion shown by each board and AACN staff member. Passion is a feeling combined with action that cannot be duplicated unless felt by the individual. To have a board and staff enthusiastic about their AACN role and the contribution made to critical care nursing practice is in one word, awesome! The future of critical care nursing lies in this passion and the guidance from AACN's leadership.

Being a Board Learning Partner was one of excitement and revelation. The opportunity is a "one of a kind" event enriching our commitment to AACN and its leadership in critical care nursing.

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